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Summary

This thesis deals with the origins of the response of one of the Dutch protestant ('reformed') denominations, the *Gereformeerden* and their political organisation, the *Antirevolutionaire Partij* (ARP) to the revolt undertaken by the Indonesian independence movement in 1945.

For non-Dutch readers a brief explanation of the title, *Gezag is gezag* ..., may be useful. The Dutch word *gezag* can be used in a neutral way, having a meaning close to 'government' or (colonial) 'rule'. In many contexts, however, it has moral implications such as can be found in 'authority'. For the *Gereformeerden* of the period discussed here, the word had distinct overtones to the God-given order in the universe in general, and in the Netherlands in particular. The full quotation, '*gezag is gezag en een rebel is een rebel*' ('authority is authority and a rebel is a rebel') was coined by J.A.H.J.S. Bruins Slot (1906-1972), one of the post-war leaders of the ARP. The name of the Anti-Revolutionary Party is also relevant for the discussion in this thesis: its leaders were deeply conscious of its historical roots as a movement opposed to the ideas of the French Revolution. The subtitle, *Kanttekeningen bij de houding van de gereformeerden in de Indonesische kwestie* can be translated as: 'Some observations on the attitude of the *Gereformeerden* towards the Indonesian question'.

The first question addressed in this thesis is whether there were any recognizable signs of an imminent revolt in the former Dutch East Indies between 1920 and 1940. It is concluded that the ARP leaders Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and A.W.F. Idenburg (1861-1935) already took into account the probability of such a revolt. The ARP leaders were well aware of the objectives of the independence movement. Although they were forewarned from many sides that the Dutch could not win a potential conflict by military means, they nevertheless did not concede to the Nationalists' claims. In this respect, the positions of Idenburg and H. Colijn (1869-1944; five times Dutch Prime Minister between 1925 and 1939) did not differ. Their policy was to take repressive measures that were published almost without exception in the ARP newspaper '*De Standaard*'. In conclusion, it is not possible to maintain the point of view that the ARP leaders were not able to foresee a revolt.

The situation was however different for the ordinary members of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, who obtained their information mainly from religious mission journals. The general picture emerging from these journals was that the majority of the population of the Dutch East Indies was peaceful and satisfied and rejected any idea of revolution. Missionaries did not support the independence movement; on the contrary, in some cases they even opposed it actively. Their position was

the result of the protection they found from the Dutch colonial government, their fear of a dominant role of Islam in an independent Indonesia and their objection against political involvement by the church. It is a misconception that already before World War II missionaries were suggesting that the colonial system should be dismantled. The disenchantment of the *Gereformeerden* in Holland with the attitude of the Indonesian people in 1945 can be explained to a great extent by the absence of such signals from the missionary workers. The proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17th 1945 came to the *Gereformeerden* as a complete surprise and the sudden sympathy for the Indonesian revolution as expressed by several missionary workers was not understood.

During World War II, the official Dutch viewpoints regarding the relationship with the Dutch East Indies had shifted to some degree. Both the Visman-report and a speech delivered by Queen Wilhelmina on December 7th 1942 indicate that at least at government level it had become acceptable to discuss a reform in the structure of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. By 1945, however, hardly anyone was aware of those documents and the shifts in opinion certainly had not reached the *Gereformeerden* in Holland. Imagining the disillusionment and bitterness in 1945, and realising that the changes that were about to start were hardly known to the general public, one can only be surprised that the *Gereformeerden* were able to abandon the pre-war colonialist way of thinking. They agreed to talk about a more autonomous position of the Indonesian territories and they made definite proposals to reform the Kingdom. It is therefore not accurate to conclude that they were committed to the position of Colijn or to the so called 'hard line' Colijn was said to have launched in the 1930's.

The decision of the *ARP* not to participate in the first post-war government, the Schermerhorn cabinet, was therefore not the result of lack of willingness to modify their attitude to the Dutch East Indies. That willingness was present indeed, and the rejection to participate had a different background. It cannot be denied however that the *ARP*'s self-chosen isolation contributed to a hardening of the opposition to the government's Indonesia policy. In that respect, the decision not to participate in the Schermerhorn administration was of crucial importance. A well-organized opposition only started when the government showed itself prepared to enter into consultations with the leaders of the independence movement. This was interpreted by the *Gereformeerden* and their *ARP* as a 'pact with the revolution' and considered absolutely unacceptable.

The opposition was characterised by joining the witch-hunt against 'traitors' like the representative of the government in Indonesia, H.J. van Mook, who was said to want to seize power by a 'revolution from above'. The leadership of the *ARP* did everything it could to throw doubt on Van Mook's integrity. Pointing out the 'guilty' was thought to be more urgent than analysing the backgrounds of the revolution. The missionary society suggested that there might be some guilt on the Dutch side too, but for the *ARP* leadership and its newspaper *Trouw* this was totally irrelevant. In their opinion, any shortcomings of the Dutch could not possibly justify the launch of a revolt. According to them, principles and not circumstances were at stake.

The *Gereformeerden* held the opinion that in the Dutch East Indies a revolution was developing after the example of the French revolution. According to G. Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), the founder of the anti-revolutionary movement in Dutch politics, turning away from God had been the principle in 1789, and his views of history were declared fully applicable to what was happening now in the Dutch East Indies. Referring to Groen van Prinsterer was typical for the way the *Gereformeerden* explained and challenged events: by analysing them through a principled mind full of doctrines. Any objection from the missionary side that this case was totally different were of no avail. For the *ARP* leaders, the violence during the 'Bersiap-period' in Indonesia was the conclusive evidence that there really was a similarity with the French revolution.

Apart from such the doctrines, phrases from the Bible played a role, in particular chapter 13 of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. The fact that Romans 13 had been used by some to justify subjection of the Dutch people to the German occupation during World War II, did not result in a more cautious interpretation. In addition, the warnings of the missionary J.H. Bavinck and others that being ruled by a foreign colonial authority was something quite different from being ruled by your own self-chosen government did not meet a response. According to the party leaders, authority (*gezag*) was the same in all circumstances and only the re-establishment of the legitimate Dutch power could be the subject of negotiations. The fact that the consequence of this policy would be a colonial war, was accepted. Bruins Slot repeatedly urged for military action.

With respect to any change of the constitution, necessary to placate the Indonesian nationalists, the party leaders took a similar line. Although the other political parties also tended towards legalism, the *ARP* used the constitution as a tool to obstruct unwanted reforms. Van Mook was accused of contempt of the constitution. The opponents of the *ARP* accused J. Schouten (1883-1963; first post-war leader of the *ARP*) and Bruins Slot of using the constitution as a straightjacket, whereas it should be adapted to developments rather than obstruct them.

The penultimate chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the person of Bavinck (1895-1964). He had a great understanding of the Javanese people and their culture and, as a consequence, of their desire for freedom. This understanding also enabled him to thoroughly discuss the implications of Romans 13 and the Fifth Commandment with the republican Christians in Indonesia. It must have been very painful for him to experience that the *Gereformeerden* on both sides of the demarcation line were able to come to terms about a new relationship between their churches, both in Indonesia and the Netherlands, but were not able to reach an agreement concerning political matters and instead proceeded to military action. Bavinck suffered deeply from this, and considered the unwillingness to really meet the other side as the heart of the Indonesian conflict. He was torn by feelings of guilt and shame.

It may be asked why the *Gereformeerden* and their *ARP* did not take advantage of a mediator such as Bavinck and did not use the knowledge and contacts that were available through the missionary society. More than anybody else, the missionaries might have been able to restore mutual trust and offer solutions. It can

only be concluded that the use of principles that were claimed to be based on the Bible, hindered an unbiased view on reality and prevented the *ARP* leaders from finding solutions. The doctrine of authority (*gezag*) that was ultimately based on Romans 13 was one of the most important principles in the Indonesian conflict. Such doctrines were however not solely used in the Indonesian conflict but were applied to all kinds of issues. If that approach was abandoned, and for instance a meeting with the Indonesian 'rebels' was agreed on, the whole system, it was feared, would fall apart.

The weakness of the system of doctrines became apparent after the transfer of sovereignty, when the *Gereformeerden* started to defend minorities such as the South-Moluccans who strove for separation from the now independent Republic of Indonesia. The minorities appealed to their right of self-determination. Precisely that right until then had been sharply condemned as a godless principle, the result of popular sovereignty and as such a product of the detested French Revolution. That long adhered to principle, in fact the identical right that had been denied to the Indonesian people, was suddenly put forward to defend the ideal of freedom of the Moluccans and Papuans. The limitations of the principles that were relied upon between 1945 and 1949 to fight the Indonesian revolution could hardly be demonstrated more clearly.

The attitude of the *Gereformeerden* and the *ARP* can be characterised properly as an example of lost opportunities. The whole episode can be put in an even more tragic perspective, when it is realised that opportunities were missed deliberately and leaders did not take advantage of everything that people like Bavinck and many others could have contributed. This is even more tragic when it is realised how much blood was spilled on both sides.

This episode in the history of the *ARP* also demonstrates the need to be careful when using the word 'Christian' in the context of politics, which is dealing with human structures rather than with the whole of the Biblical message.